## War's End: *The 14 Points* and the *Treaty of Versailles*

In 1918, as World War I was coming to an end, President Woodrow Wilson of the United States outlined a plan for peace known as the 14 Points. These points were designed to prevent future wars by promoting fairness and self-determination among nations. However, when Germany signed the **armistice** that ended the war**,** the final peace treaty did not fully reflect Wilson's vision and left many feeling dissatisfied, especially in Germany. This treaty was called the **Treaty of Versailles.**

**Wilson's *14 Points*:** *The 14 Points* was an outline of the vision President Wilson had for the peace terms that would be reached at the end of World War I. He wanted to achieve fair treatment for all countries and to create rules that would prevent another war like World War I from ever happening again. Germany agreed to surrender in 1918 based on the promise of the terms of the *14 Points*.

1. Open relationships among countries and no secret treaties.
2. Freedom of the seas in peace and war.
3. Free trade between countries.
4. Disarmament to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.
5. Fair colonial claims, considering the interests of the people affected.
6. Evacuation of Russian territory.
7. Restoration of Belgium.
8. Restoration of French territory and Alsace-Lorraine.
9. Adjustment of Italian borders along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.
10. Self-rule for the peoples of Austria-Hungary.
11. Redrawing of Balkan boundaries.
12. Freedom for Turkey's non-Turkish nationalities.
13. Independent Poland with access to the sea.
14. Creation of a **League of Nations** to guarantee political independence and territorial integrity.

**The Treaty of Versailles:**
The Treaty of Versailles, signed in 1919, held Germany responsible for the war and imposed harsh penalties on the country. Some key points included:

- Germany had to accept full responsibility for causing the war.
- Germany lost territories and colonies.
- Germany's military was severely limited.
- **Reparations** were imposed on Germany, causing economic hardship.

**Comparison–Germany's Treatment:**

- **14 Points:** *The 14 Points* emphasized fair treatment and self-determination for all nations, including Germany.
- **Treaty of Versailles:** Germany felt the treaty was unfair as it did not align with the principles of the *14 Points*. The harsh penalties and loss of territory were seen as punitive.

**Promises vs. Reality:** *The 14 Points* promised a more just and lasting peace, advocating for fairness and the rights of all nations. *The Treaty of Versailles*, while aiming to maintain peace, imposed heavy burdens on Germany, leading to anger and setting the stage for future conflicts.

Adolf Hitler, a powerful speaker, took advantage of Germany's anger and feelings of unfair treatment. He promised to make Germany strong again, undo the treaty's damage, and bring back national pride. Hitler's nationalist ideas and promises to restore Germany's greatness appealed to many Germans who felt mistreated by the Treaty of Versailles. This support helped him rise to power and eventually become the leader of Nazi Germany.

**The Treaty of Versailles Contributed to Hitler's Rise:**

**1, Nationalism and Anger:** The harsh conditions of the Treaty of Versailles fueled feelings of nationalism and anger among the German people. Adolf Hitler used this anger to gain support for his extremist ideas.

2. **Promises of Restoration:** Hitler promised to restore Germany to its former glory and undo the injustices of the Treaty of Versailles. This message resonated with many Germans who felt betrayed by the treaty.

**3. Rise of Extremism:** The economic hardships and sense of injustice caused by the treaty created fertile ground for extremist ideologies like Nazism to take root in Germany. Hitler capitalized on these sentiments to rise to power.

The connection between Germany's treatment in the Treaty of Versailles and Hitler's rise to power shows how much post-war decisions have shaped the course of history. The treaty's harsh measures, and the economic hardships they caused created a fertile environment for extreme beliefs to take hold. In this case, the harsh treatment of Germany and the anger and resentment in Germany after the war led to the catastrophic consequences of World War II. Understanding historical events like this one shows the importance of seeking fair and lasting peace settlements to prevent future conflicts and the rise of radical ideologies.

*Below is an excerpt of Adolf Hitler's speech, April 17th, 1923 on the Treaty of Versailles and on rebuilding Germany.*

So long as this Treaty stands there can be no resurrection of the German people; no social reform of any kind is possible! The Treaty was made in order to bring 20 million Germans to their deaths and to ruin the German nation. But those who made the Treaty cannot set it aside. As its foundation our Movement formulated three demands:

1. Setting aside of the Peace Treaty.
2. Unification of all Germans.
3. Land and soil [*Grund und Boden*] to feed our nation.

Our movement could formulate these demands, since it was not our Movement which caused the War, it has not made the Republic, it did not sign the Peace Treaty.

There is thus one thing which is the first task of this Movement: it desires to make the German once more National, that his Fatherland shall stand for him above everything else. It desires to teach our people to understand afresh the truth of the old saying: He who will not be a hammer must be an anvil. An anvil we are today, and that anvil will be beaten until out of the anvil we fashion once more a hammer, a German sword!